

SUPPORT FOR THE AMENDMENTS

This Amendment amends the specification to correct a typographical error; amends Claim 1 and 4-5; and adds new Claims 6-8. Support for the amendments is found in the specification and claims as originally filed. Support for the amendment to the specification to indicate that "x" denotes the presence of cracking is found in the specification at least page 17, lines 8-10 and 16-22, where samples 11-12 are indicated as being comparative examples with poor bendability; page 16, Table 2, where the poor bendability (i.e., R_0 and R_1) of samples 11-12 is denoted by a "x"; and at page 15, lines 17-23, where poor bendability is associated with cracking. Support for Claim 1 is found in the specification at least at page 9, lines 12-13. ("P ensures as much retained austenite as desired. The amount of P necessary for this effect is no less than 0.03 mass%."), and page 6, lines 2-4 ("The steel sheet according to the present invention contains retained austenite and ferrite which constitute the main structure (accounting for no less than 70 area%)."). Support for new Claims 6-8 is found in the specification at least at page 6, line 11 to page 8, line 4; and page 12, lines 2-8. No new matter would be introduced by entry of these amendments.

Upon entry of these amendments, Claims 1-8 will be pending in this application. Claim 1 is independent.

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

Applicants respectfully request entry of the foregoing and reexamination and reconsideration of the application, as amended, in light of the remarks that follow.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the courtesies extended to their representative during the May 9, 2005, personal interview.

As discussed at the personal interview, although conventional steel sheets combine high strength and excellent formability, conventional steel sheets having high strength are

lacking in bendability. See, e.g, specification at page 1, lines 15-16; page 1, line 26 to page 2, line 1; page 2, line 14 to page 3, line 1.

The present invention provides a steel sheet combining high strength and excellent bendability. This combination of properties is achieved by the present invention using a specific two-stage heat treatment to control the number of carbide grains to no more than 40 per 2000 μm^2 . See, e.g., specification at page 1, lines 4-6; page 4, line 16 to page 5, line 12; page 6, line 11 to page 8, line 4.

Claims 1-5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,818,074 ("Matsuoka"); U.S. Patent No. 6,797,078 ("Issartel"); or U.S. Patent No. 6,280,538 ("Soshiroda"). Matsuoka, Issartel and Soshiroda disclose conventional steel sheets having high strength and excellent press formability, usable for shaping and stamping. See, e.g., the abstracts of Matsuoka, Issartel and Soshiroda.

During the May 9, 2005, personal interview, the Examiner asserted that the cited prior art anticipates the present invention.

However, Matsuoka discloses only examples containing 0.01 wt.% P. Matsuoka at Tables 1, 7, 10, 13, 16. Furthermore, Soshiroda discloses examples containing at most 0.018 wt.% P. Soshiroda at Table 1. Thus, Matsuoka and Soshiroda each fails to exemplify the combination of features of independent Claim 1, in particular the independent Claim 1 limitation of "P: from 0.03 mass% to 0.15 mass%". As a result, Matsuoka and Soshiroda each fails to anticipate the claimed invention.

Issartel discloses a steel strip composition that, after coiling at five different temperatures (400°C, 450°C, 500°C, 550°C and 600°C), contains various amounts of ferrite, bainite and residual austenite. Issartel at columns 5-6. However, Issartel fails to exemplify the combination of features of independent Claim 1, in particular the independent Claim 1

limitation that "the retained austenite and ferrite account for no less than 70 area% of the steel sheet". As a result, Issartel fails to anticipate the claimed invention.

Any *prima facie* case of obviousness based on Matsuoka , Issartel or Soshiroda is rebutted by the significant improvement in the combination of high strength and excellent bendability that is achieved in accordance with the present invention over the critical range of "no more than 40 carbide grams per 2000 μm^2 ". See attached Declaration under 37 C.F.R. § 1.132. Matsuoka , Issartel and Soshiroda, which are directed to steel sheets having a combination of high strength and formability, fail to suggest the combination of high strength and excellent bendability that is achieved by the present invention. As a result, any *prima facie* case of obviousness based on Matsuoka , Issartel or Soshiroda is rebutted. Thus, the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) should be withdrawn.

Pursuant to M.P.E.P. 821.04, after independent product Claim 1 is allowed, Applicants respectfully request examination and allowance of new method Claims 7-8, which include all of the limitations of product Claim 1.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the application is in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully request favorable consideration and prompt allowance of the application.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further is necessary in order to place the application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attached:

Declaration Under 37 C.F.R. § 1.132 (unexecuted, executed copy to follow)

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